



General Assembly

February Session, 2016

Raised Bill No. 176

LCO No. 1483



Referred to Committee on EDUCATION

Introduced by:
(ED)

AN ACT CONCERNING THE SMART START PROGRAM.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. Section 10-506 of the 2016 supplement to the general
2 statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof
3 (*Effective from passage*):

4 (a) For the fiscal years ending June 30, 2015, to June 30, 2024,
5 inclusive, the Office of Early Childhood, in consultation with the
6 Department of Education, shall design and administer the Connecticut
7 Smart Start competitive grant program to provide grants to local and
8 regional boards of education for capital and operating expenses related
9 to establishing or expanding a preschool program under the
10 jurisdiction of the board of education for the town. A local or regional
11 board of education may submit an application to the office, in
12 accordance with the provisions of subsection (b) of this section, and
13 may receive (1) a grant for capital expenses in an amount not to exceed
14 seventy-five thousand dollars per classroom for costs related to the
15 renovation of an existing public school to accommodate the
16 establishment or expansion of a preschool program, and (2) an annual

17 grant for operating expenses (A) in an amount not to exceed five
18 thousand dollars per child served by such grant, or (B) in an amount
19 not to exceed seventy-five thousand dollars for each preschool
20 classroom, provided no town shall receive a total annual grant for
21 operating expenses greater than three hundred thousand dollars. Each
22 local or regional board of education that establishes or expands a
23 preschool program under this section shall be eligible to receive an
24 annual grant for operating expenses for a period of five years,
25 provided such preschool program meets standards established by the
26 Commissioner of Early Childhood. Such local or regional board of
27 education may submit an application for renewal of such grant to the
28 office.

29 (b) On and after July 1, 2014, local and regional boards of education,
30 individually or cooperatively, pursuant to section 10-158a, may apply,
31 at such time and in such manner as the commissioner prescribes, to the
32 office for a capital grant and an operating grant for the purposes
33 described in subsection (a) of this section. To be eligible to receive such
34 grants under this section, an applicant board of education shall (1)
35 demonstrate that it has a need for establishing or expanding a
36 preschool program using information requested by the commissioner
37 on a form prescribed by the commissioner, such as data collected from
38 the preschool experience survey, described in section 10-515, (2)
39 submit a plan for the expenditure of grant funds received under this
40 section that outlines how such board of education will use such funds
41 to establish or expand a preschool program, including, but not limited
42 to, the amount that such board will contribute to the operation of such
43 preschool program and how such board of education will provide
44 access to preschool for children who would not otherwise be able to
45 enroll in a preschool program, and (3) submit a letter of support for
46 establishing or expanding a preschool program by the local or regional
47 school readiness council, described in section 10-16r, if any, for the
48 school district. The commissioner shall give priority to boards of
49 education (A) that demonstrate the greatest need for the establishment

50 or expansion of a preschool program, and (B) whose plan allocates at
51 least [sixty] fifty per cent of the spaces in such preschool program to
52 children who are members of families that are at or below seventy-five
53 per cent of the state median income, or fifty per cent of the spaces in
54 such preschool program to children who are eligible for free and
55 reduced price lunches. The commissioner, in reviewing applications
56 submitted under this subsection, shall also take into consideration (i)
57 whether an applicant board of education (I) currently offers a full-day
58 kindergarten program, (II) will be cooperating and coordinating with
59 other governmental and community programs to provide services
60 during periods when the preschool program is not in session, or (III)
61 will collaborate with other boards of education, as part of a
62 cooperative arrangement pursuant to section 10-158a, to offer a
63 regional preschool program, and (ii) current community capacity for
64 preschool programs and current opportunities for preschool for
65 children in the community.

66 (c) A preschool program created or expanded under this section
67 shall (1) contain a classroom with an individual who holds certification
68 pursuant to section 10-145b with an endorsement in early childhood
69 education or early childhood special education and is an employee of
70 the board of education providing a preschool program under this
71 section, (2) maintain a classroom size and teacher-child ratio that is in
72 compliance with standards established by the National Association for
73 the Education of Young Children, (3) obtain accreditation, as described
74 in section 10-16p, not later than three years after the creation or
75 expansion of the preschool program, [and] (4) be located in a public
76 school or in a space maintained by an early care and education and
77 child development program provider, pursuant to an agreement
78 between a board of education and such early care and education and
79 child development program provider, and (5) allocate the spaces in
80 such preschool program as outlined in the plan for the expenditure of
81 grant funds described in subsection (b) of this section.

82 (d) Each local or regional board of education receiving a grant under

83 this section shall submit an annual report, on a form and in a manner
84 prescribed by the commissioner, to the Office of Early Childhood
85 regarding the status and operation of the preschool program.

86 (e) A local or regional board of education receiving grant funds
87 under this section may implement a sliding fee scale for the cost of
88 services provided to children enrolled in such preschool program.

89 (f) For the school year commencing July 1, 2016, and each school
90 year thereafter, each local or regional board of education receiving a
91 grant under this section shall commence such preschool program on
92 the same day as the first day of the regular school year for
93 kindergarten.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	<i>from passage</i>	10-506

Statement of Purpose:

To make revisions to the Connecticut Smart Start competitive grant program regarding priorities for applicants, how grant recipients are to allocate preschool program spaces, and the day when the preschool program is to commence each school year.

[Proposed deletions are enclosed in brackets. Proposed additions are indicated by underline, except that when the entire text of a bill or resolution or a section of a bill or resolution is new, it is not underlined.]